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A N
E S S A Y
O N

The continuance of immediate revelations of facts
and future events in the Christian church.

By the Reverend Mr THOMAS GILLESPIE, Minister
of the Gospel at Dunfermline.

W I T H

A letter on the danger of considering the influences of
the Spirit as a rule of duty;—by the late Reverend
Mr JAMES Cuthbert, Minister of Culrofs.

A N D

A preface;—by JOHN ERSKINE, D. D. one of the
Ministers of Edinburgh.

EDINBURGH:

Printed by A. MURRAY and J. COCHRAN.

For W. GRAY, Front of the Exchange.

MDCCLXXI.

[Price Sixpence.]



P R E F A C E.

ENthusiasm is by no means the disease, of which, in this part of the world, those either in high or low life are in greatest danger. The opposite extreme, a contempt, I mean, of the Holy Ghost's convincing, converting, sanctifying, and comforting operations, seems more prevalent; at least, if we may form a judgement from the countenance given to the exhibition on the Edinburgh theatre of the Minor, where that account of these operations, which is clearly founded on the sacred oracles, and the professed belief of which makes a part of the established religion, both in North and South Britain, was insolently and profanely burlesqued.

But though the influences of the Spirit are absolutely necessary to lead us to the saving knowledge, firm belief, and sincere practice of true religion; yet the inspired scripture, not those influences, are the only perfect and infallible rule of faith and manners: and if men will substitute imagined light and direction from heaven, in place of the plain decisions of scripture, or even add them to those decisions, as of equal authority, a wide door is opened to the most fatal delusions. Bad men have in fact been hereby betrayed to entertain ill-grounded and ruinous hopes of their future felicity; and even good men, blinded and led astray by this deceitful guide, have rashly concluded, that they were doing the church of God good service, while their conduct was dishonourable to their profession, and injurious to the real interests of religion.

Dangerous, however, as such mistakes are, the best and wisest have not always been exempted from them. The person to whom Mr Cuthbert's letter was addressed, was one of the worthiest and ablest clergymen in the north of Scotland, and his co-presbyters seem to have been men eminently devout; and yet, in a very important instance, they appear to have regulated their conduct, not by the scripture, but by what they looked upon as the immediate direction and countenance of heaven. Some who were more deeply and dangerously intangled in such fatal snares, have lived to see and acknowledge it, and to give warning to others. The humble and ingenuous confession and retractations of the Rev. Mr James Davenport of Long Island, published at Boston 1744, afford a remarkable instance of this. By listening to impulses suggested to him from particular texts of scripture, with glosses quite foreign to the direct, plain, and true sense of the place, he was hurried on for a time to the wildest extravagances; arrogantly condemning, as unconverted, ministers of sound principles, and unblemished lives; advising and urging to separation from them; encouraging private persons to a ministerial and authoritative method of exhorting,

&c. : and thus he was the unhappy occasion of many disorders, rents, and divisions, and of the enemies of religion hardening themselves in their wickedness, deriding the operations of the Holy Ghost, and blaspheming the right ways of the Lord. At last, by the blessing of God on the endeavours of the Rev. Mr Solomon Williams of Lebanon, he was made sensible, that his own spirit, or the prince of darkness, had been guiding him, while he had imagined himself led by the Spirit of God. He saw it his duty publicly to bewail this ; and the after part of his life was useful and exemplary.

I acknowledge, the instances that have been published in Fleming's fulfilling of the scriptures, and in other books of modern prophecies, verified by the event, seem a specious plea, that one kind of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit still continues. A German divine * mentions several remarkable prophecies of the Reformation ; some of them fixing the time when it was to commence, others pointing out Luther as the instrument of it. He also takes notice, that Luther, among other things, foretold the death of Emser, and the dreadful calamities with which Germany was to be visited, after his own death. — I think Mr Gillespie has given a satisfying answer to this difficulty. Human sagacity, by attending to the operation of natural and moral causes, may form shrewd conjectures of what is future ; and a careful and devout study of the scriptures may sometimes suggest what will probably be the dispensations of Providence. It was in this manner that Mr Robert Fleming accounted to the late Mr Guthart of Edinburgh for his foretelling the Revolution. It merits however particular notice, that good men, confident of future events, have often been mistaken ; though, from an excessive delicacy and regard to their honour, these mistakes (the knowledge of which might have proved an useful caution to posterity) have been seldom published. I shall mention a few instances. Mr Morgan Edwards, a Baptist minister in Philadelphia, highly esteemed by Christians of all denominations in that city, preached a sermon 1st January 1770, on Jer. xxviii. 16. and published it, in which, after attempting to show, that, even in modern times, some, from audible voices, visions, dreams, or unaccountable impressions on their minds, have certainly known the day of their death. He adds, p. 6. " I myself know a man, who, on the 9th day of March in the year 1755, was seized with a persuasion, that, at the end of full fifteen years from that time, he should be dead. The impression was sudden and strong ; so strong, as not to leave a doubt respecting the issue, and has continued the same to this day." And again, p. 11. " It is certain, morally certain, that some one of us will die this

* Harwein in diss. de vaticiniis Lutheri, Wittenb. 1755.

“ year. There stands among you one who firmly believes
 “ that he is the man.” When uttering these words, the gentle-
 man who sent me his sermon informs me, that he put his hand
 on his own breast. When the day came on which he expected
 to die, several of his friends waited on him to learn the event,
 and he found himself somewhat indisposed: but happily his
 constitution proved too strong for his imagination, and he still
 lives, and preaches as usual.

If this preface falls into the hands of any in his congregation,
 let me caution them against despising him in their hearts, and
 undervaluing his ministerial qualifications on account of what
 has happened. Let none imagine, that only children in under-
 standing, or children in grace and spiritual discernments, are
 in hazard of being thus deceived. In the life of Dr Isaac Ma-
 ther, by his son Dr Cotton Mather, published at Boston 1724,
 I find a number of incidents were foretold by the first, and exactly
 accomplished, *ex. gr.* p. 78. a dreadful fire in Boston; p. 86.
 a disease that would soon break out there, and prove mortal to
 many; p. 98. the deliverance of New England from the evils
 with which it was threatened by Kirk being appointed their go-
 vernor; p. 106. the Doctor’s finding things in England in such
 a state when he went thither May 1688, that he should have an
 opportunity to do special service for the people of New Eng-
 land. But, p. 192. it is observed, that after his last return to
 New England, he had strong impressions for months together,
 and even at such times as one should suppose least obnoxious
 to Satanic illusions, that he should yet have another opportuni-
 ty to do special service for Christ in England; yet he never saw
 England any more. His learned and worthy son, though an
 assertor of the doctrine of a particular faith, takes occasion, ib.
 p. 195. to caution against laying too much stress upon it, lest
 men find themselves plunged into a hope that makes ashamed;
 the counterfeits of that jewel being so very fine, that it will re-
 quire a judgement almost more than human to discern them.
 I have heard from unquestionable authority, that the Rev. Mr
 Boston of Etrick, author of the Fourfold State, &c. had strong
 impressions and expectations of a particular event, produced in
 circumstances that gave them peculiar weight; yet after inci-
 dents convinced him, that the expected event could never hap-
 pen; which brought upon him painful jealousies as to the reali-
 ty of the divine influences on his heart. A citizen of Edin-
 burgh, deservedly esteemed a solid judicious Christian, whom
 I sometimes visited in his distress during the last years of his
 life, foretold, as I was informed, in consequence of great en-
 largement in prayer, and subsequent impressions on his mind,
 the recovery of a fellow Christian, when friends and physicians
 had well nigh despaired of it; and the event fell out accordingly.
 But I also know, that he expressed as strong a persuasion, that
 an

an affair in which the interests of religion were thought considerably concerned, would turn out in a way very different from that in which it really did. Surely they think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, who imagine, that they are superior in spiritual discernment to such wise and good men, and that they are better qualified to detect and avoid the artful devices of Satan transforming himself into an angel of light.

Several circumstances drew my attention early in life to the question considered in the following Essay and Letters; and the year before I was ordained a minister, I became fully convinced of the absurdity of pretending to immediate revelations, or of considering the influences of the Spirit as a rule of duty; for which I was not a little indebted to the perusal of President Edwards's thoughts on the revival in New England, and to frequent conversations with Mr Gillespie. What I have observed since that time, of the fatal effects of such pretences, has much confirmed me in these sentiments. I have often wished to see cases so important in Christian practice fully and accurately discussed. I have heard of two pamphlets on these subjects *, but have never seen them. It gave me therefore peculiar pleasure, to find the case of modern revelations judiciously and thoroughly canvassed in the Reverend Mr Gillespie's following Essay.—I am happy in this opportunity of publicly testifying my esteem and regard for a faithful minister of Christ, and a meek and humble sufferer for conscience sake. The hard, and, as I apprehend, unconstitutional sentence of deposition, passed upon him May 1752, and still standing unrepealed, for his refusing to bear a part in a settlement, which he thought he could not be active in without violating his ordination-vows, has made his integrity, and his forbearing and forgiving spirit, generally known. Indeed, in a speech last general assembly, his character was painted in colours that represented it as the reverse of all this. It was alledged, that he gloried in his deposition, and instead of accounting it any advantage, would despise and disregard his being restored to the exercise of his ministry in the church of Scotland. To countenance this charge, one part of his speech, when the sentence of deposition was intimated to him, that taken separately might seem to give colour to that aspersions, was exactly repeated; and another part of it, that would have shown the charge utterly unjust, was artfully suppressed. How different from this the candour of some others; who though, by their sentiments of the constitution of the church of Scotland, they were led to vote for, or approve Mr

* Ferd. Stosch, *Diff. ad 11. xxxii. 3. de ecclesia N. T. prophetis non indigente*, Lingen 1748: (which, from the account of it in a foreign literary journal, seems a learned and ingenious performance), and Ros of Stratfield's *Plain Address to Quakers, Moravians, Separatists, &c. on immediate impulses*; printed, I suppose, at New London.

Gillespie's deposition; yet, on every proper occasion, have openly declared, that his manner of receiving that sentence struck them with a high idea of his genuine worth; and who would have done it when the motion for reponing him was under deliberation last assembly, had not the cry for a question put it out of their power.

Hitherto Mr Gillespie's modesty has, in a great measure, concealed from the public his abilities, and has prevented his appearing as an author; though it is now twenty-eight years since he was urged by the late Dr Doddridge, and others, to complete and publish an excellent treatise on temptations, arising from the different ages, constitutions, and circumstances of mankind, composed in a sententious style, much resembling that of Lord Bacon, and well suited to point out the rocks on which the virtue, happiness, and usefulness of mankind, have in all ages so often suffered shipwreck.

The following Essay needs not my recommendation; it will speak for itself; at least with those who desire to know what is the truth, and who prefer convincing arguments to high-sounding words of vanity. The author, deeply impressed with matters of infinitely greater importance, never affected superficial ornaments of style. The world however may now see, and judge, with what justice ill-natured whisperers and backbiters, petulant declaimers, and dastardly mean-spirited anonymous scribblers *, have aspersed him, as a weak wrong-headed enthusiast, incapable either to please or edify a judicious audience. Such wanton unprovoked defamation, especially from those whose situation gave them easy access to be well informed, such stabs in the dark, bewray either a low and mercenary servility, courting favours or honours in this way to which it could not otherwise aspire, or a malicious depraved heart, that delights in insulting the oppressed. But the usefulness of his ministry needs not their witness; and indeed has higher witness than that of man. It has epistles of commendation, written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, in fleshly tables of the heart. Yet I must be permitted to say, that these who have only heard him occasionally, may be in danger of forming a very imperfect, and even unjust, idea of his manner of preaching. When preaching at communions, especially at a distance from his charge, he often entered far into certain soul-exercises, sel-

* When facts reasoned from or ridiculed, have been sufficiently proven, or are of such general notoriety as supercedes the necessity, and supplies the place of a proof, the public has no concern with an author's name; because the force of the reasoning, or propriety of the ridicule, no how depends on that circumstance. But when facts are alleged derogatory to one or more characters, that have no support save the credit of the author who asserts them, the public is intitled to demand, who is this same author, that it may examine what stress can be laid on his judgement, integrity, and opportunity of knowing facts; and thence may judge, what degree of weight can be allowed to his testimony.

dom minutely handled from the pulpit; but which he had considered with peculiar care; and undoubtedly ministers act judiciously, and bid fairest for building up their hearers in knowledge, faith, holiness, and comfort, when, on these occasions, they handle doctrinal or practical subjects, which they are best qualified to throw light upon, and manage to advantage. Some of Mr Gillespie's discourses, which even good men, who had no experience of such spiritual distress, censured as improper or unnecessary, were singularly blessed to some deep sunk in sorrow, and even on the brink of despair. But in preaching at home, if I can form a judgement from attending several months on his ministry, Mr Gillespie seldom introduced these matters; and instead of confining himself, as many do, to subjects suited to his particular genius, he considered what was most needful for the bulk of his hearers, keeping back from them nothing profitable, but declaring to them the whole counsel of God, giving law and gospel, comfort and terror, privileges and duties, their proper place. I never sat under a ministry better calculated to awaken the thoughtless and secure, to caution convinced sinners against what would stifle convictions, or prevent their issuing in conversion, and to point out the differences between vital Christianity, and specious counterfeited appearances of it.—If I have wandered from the original design of this preface, by enlarging on these matters, and if I have expressed myself with some degree of warmth, is there not a cause? When under a load of unjust abuse and ridicule, Mr Gillespie's meekness has kept him silent, as a deaf man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs; that surely is no reason why his friends, and the friends of the cause in which he has suffered, should be silent too. The benevolent will not severely censure my stepping a little out of my road to defend a worthy character insidiously and cruelly attacked.

Mr Cuthbert's letter to Mr W. S. of which I have procured, and carefully compared, two manuscript copies, contains sensible and spirited reflections on the danger of considering the influences of the Holy Ghost as a rule of duty. Mr Cuthbert was greatly admired for refinement of taste, politeness of manners, and readiness of wit and humour; and no less so for more substantial qualities, not always allied with these showy ones, eminent piety, extensive learning, and sound judgement; and though the accuracy of method, and elegance of style, for which he was so distinguished, cannot be expected in a familiar letter, I am confident that this publication will do no dishonour to his memory.

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JOHN ERSKINE.

Edinburgh, May 7. 1771.

The QUESTION,

Whether immediate divine revelations of facts and future events have continued in the Christian Church after the Apostolical age?

STATED, and EXAMINED,

By an impartial representation of the arguments on both sides.

For the continuance of these revelations it has been thus argued :

THERE are innumerable instances of such revelations in different ages, which those on the opposite side of the question cannot disprove, and indeed do not deny. That being the case, it is vain to argue; for facts are stubborn things, and cannot be removed or bended. God has nowhere said in scripture, that he will not give such revelations after the first age of Christianity; therefore to deny the possibility of them, is, with daring presumption, to limit sovereignty. The Old-Testament church had immediate revelations of facts and future events, not only by prophets, who had the extraordinary gift of revealing things done at a distance, for which they had no sensible evidence, 2 Kings vi. 8.—13.; and of foretelling things to come, chap. vii. 1.; but in ordinary course, as an universal privilege of members of the church, to be asked and obtained as occasion required, 1 Sam. xxiii. 9.—13.; xxx. 7.—9.; Exod. xxviii. 29.; Numb. xxvii. 21.; Judg. i. 1. 2.; xx. 18. To affirm, that there are no such immediate revelations of present occurrences, and future events, in the New-Testament church, since the Apostolical age, is to main-

tain, that the Old-Testament church had a most valuable and useful privilege of which the New-Testament one is deprived, and in place of which it enjoys nothing; which is surely hard to be admitted without the clearest proof. Those of different sentiments do not deny that there are still divine dreams, containing intimations of facts, and premonitions of dangers. These are immediate revelations. If persons have revelations in that way asleep, may they not also receive them in other ways when awake? Some on that side of the question have affirmed, that the Lord has not intimated, that he was to make no addition to the canon of the scripture as a perfect rule of faith and practice, after the book of Revelation was given to the church. The threatening denounced against them that should add to the things of the prophecy of that book, respected the Apocalypse in particular, not the whole Bible in general. How much less has the Lord God declared, he is to give no immediate revelations, such as the argument supposes, to particular believers? Though immediate revelations of facts, and future providences, are not of the same weight to other persons as to those who receive them; because they cannot communicate the evidence of their divine original to others, this proves not that they cannot exist: for there are things in Christianity which believers experience, but cannot fully represent to others, Rom. viii. 26. Different passages of scripture give reason to expect such revelations, Gen. xviii. 17. *And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?* viz. the destruction of Sodom. The reasons why God revealed this to Abraham, intimated in the following verses, seem to conclude, that still in some instances the Lord will reveal his works of judgement, or of mercy, to other his faithful servants; Psal. xxv. 14. *The secret of the Lord that is with them that fear him*; it would seem, is the secret events of his providence, not the secrets of his covenant and grace: for the secret of the Lord there, and his covenant that he will shew to them that fear him, are declared to be two distinct things, by the word *and* put betwixt them. Is. xlv. 11. *Thus saith the Lord, Ask me of things to come.* As things to come are

and future events, these words appear not only a warrant to expect such immediate revelation, but a command to ask it from the Lord. Amos iii. 7. *Surely, the Lord will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret to his servants the prophets.* As this seems to be a declaration, that the Lord inflicted no judgements in Old-Testament times, without revealing them to his prophets, that they might warn the people; and believers now are kings and priests to him; it is to be presumed he reveals to them many, or at least some, of his works, both of judgement and mercy. John xv. 15. Christ tells his apostles and disciples, *Henceforth, from that time, he called them not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth, his resolutions and intentions: but he had called them friends; for all things he had heard of the Father, received in commission for their good, he had made known unto them,* would reveal to his disciples. And immediate revelations of works of providence, and future events, seem very much for the benefit of believers, in certain circumstances, in the apprehension of many. John xvi. 13. says Christ to his disciples, *Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, — he will shew you things to come.* He would be a spirit of prophecy in them, to make known, reveal to them, before they took place, things needful to be known by them, and to be discovered by them to the church; and as that promise seems not to be limited to the apostles, and Christ's disciples in that age, but to be extended to his disciples in all ages till the end of time, it would appear to be a promise of immediate revelation of facts, and future events, to followers of the Lamb in all generations.

To prove that immediate revelations of facts, and future events, are not continued to the Christian church after the Apostolical age, it is thus reasoned.

To admit it, supposes persons thus favoured from Heaven under the same extraordinary divine influence with prophets and apostles; yea, on a level, in respect of divine inspiration, with those employed by the Holy

Ghost as penmen of the scripture; for this supposed gift is equal to, yea is divine inspiration. Therefore to admit it, is to confound extraordinary and ordinary privileges, while the infallible rule keeps them distinct: for even in Old-Testament times, when a small part, or no part, of the scripture was given to the church, immediate divine revelations were not common universal privileges, but extraordinary divine condescensions to some particular persons. The Lord now speaks to his church, not immediately, as to patriarchs, and prophets, who did not enjoy the canon of scripture; but mediately, by his written word, as a perfect and infallible rule of faith and practice; just as the King of Great Britain speaks to his subjects only by acts of parliament, and proclamations, with advice of his council. This seems declared in the plainest and strongest manner, Heb. i. 1, 2. *God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son;* for Christ the son of God speaks to his church by his word, John v. 39. Thus, as all divine revelations are mediate since the canon of the scripture was completed, there are no immediate revelations. There is no reason, either from scripture, or the nature of things, and dispositions of providence, to suppose, that all the other extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, mentioned 1 Cor. xii. 8.—11. given to the church in the apostolical age, for confirmation of the truth of Christianity, as from God, to the unbelieving world, 1 Cor. xiv. 22. are long since, yea soon after the apostolical age, ceased, and only the gift of prophecy continued till now, of which immediate revelations of facts, and future events, are evidently a branch. From Deut. xiii. 1. 2.; xviii. 22. compared, it appears, that it is no sufficient sign of a true prophet, or that one has received immediate divine revelations of facts, and future events, when things he has foretold come to pass; but it is an infallible demonstration one is a false prophet, has not received such revelations, if any one thing he has predicted does not follow, nor come to pass. By this touchstone, it may be presumed, all who have prophesied since the apostolical

cal age will be cast, and their supposed immediate divine revelations would fall to the ground, did we know all they foretold, and supposed revealed to them: for from what is known of several having failed, in one or more things they predicted, who were of the most eminent, it is more than probable, or may be fairly concluded, all have foretold one or more things that did not come to pass. For predictions of things that fell out accordingly, have been, in different ages and places, remembered and recorded, while those that did not follow, but failed, have been overlooked and forgot. The object and ground of all divine faith is the divine testimony; the written word of God. There is no bottom for faith of immediate revelations in scripture; and as faith in them terminates on no testimony of God in his word, such immediate revelation, and faith of it, must be a human fancy. All prophets (except ordinary teachers in the church, sometimes signified by that name) had the power to work miracles, to confirm their divine mission as prophets, or at least the one gift attended the other in the church; and as the gift of working miracles confessedly expired at the end of the apostolical age, or soon after, so must also the gift of prophecy, or immediate revelations, have expired. There is nothing in scripture to countenance the supposition of immediate divine revelations still continued in the Christian church. Thus it is an unscriptural opinion. There is somewhat in the Bible that seems plainly to intimate, that they are not to be desired, expected, received; Deut. xxix. 29. *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, not to us, such as facts with which we are not acquainted, and future events; but those things which are revealed, the matter of divine revelation in scripture, belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law,* the Bible, Psal. xix. 7. and nothing other or further. John xxi. 20.—23. when the Apostle Peter saw John the beloved disciple, he said to Christ, *What shall this man do? what is to become of him? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, if by a miraculous work I should preserve him in life till my second coming, what*

is that to thee? thou hast no concern to know that, or other future events; *follow thou me*; do thy duty, and leave events in the hands of me, the administrator of the kingdom of Providence. Acts i. 6. *When they, the eleven apostles, therefore were come together, they asked him, Christ, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?* Ver. 7. *And he said unto them, It is not for you, it is not meet, nor for your good, to know the times or the seasons, future events, and the periods when they are to happen, which the Father hath put in his own power, hath hid, will keep secret, and conceal from you.* Eccles. vii. 14. *God hath set the day of prosperity, and the day of adversity, the one over against the other*; he hath wisely ordained and ordered, that prosperity and adversity should succeed one another, and be mixed and disposed with such variety in the course of the lives of persons, *to the end that man should find nothing after him*, that no man might be able to find out or foresee what should certainly befall him in after periods of his life: A plain intimation, that the Lord will not reveal what he hath ordained in the course of providence, and that persons should be incapable to foresee it. Chap. viii. 7. *For he (man, ver. 6.) knoweth not that which shall be*; that is, he knows not future contingent events by immediate divine revelation, nor in any other way. This passage alone, and by itself, seems decisive and determining against the existence of immediate revelations; in the sense in which the question is stated. Chap. ix. 12. *For man also knoweth not his time*, the time of his death, or of other sore troubles or distresses the Lord may be pleased to lay him under; the Lord does not immediately reveal them to him, or discover them to him in any other way. Chap. x. 14. *A man cannot tell what shall be*. If so, the Lord does not immediately reveal to him things to come. 1 Thess. v. 2. 3. *The day of the Lord, the destruction of the Jewish nation for crucifying the Lord of Glory, was to come as a thief in the night*, utterly unexpected at that season; therefore not particularly revealed, in respect of its precise time; which is confirmed in the strongest manner, ver. 3. As an event
of

of such importance in different regards was not revealed as to the season of its commencement, there is no reason to apprehend lesser facts and events are immediately revealed. As no man, no not the angels in heaven, neither the Son, knoweth of that day and hour when the world shall end, and the general judgement commence, but the Father, Mark xiii. 32.; can it be expected, is it to be believed, facts and future events are immediately revealed to persons by the Lord, seeing the reason why the time of the general judgement is hid, which is, that persons should take heed, watch, and pray, for they know not when the time is, ver. 33. equally holds good for secret facts and future events not being immediately revealed? The particular faith, supposed belief, of immediate revelations of facts, and future events, is an extraordinary gift of the Spirit, and an extraordinary gift confessedly now ceased; 1 Cor. xii. 9.; xiii. 2.; Jam. v. 14. 15.; therefore must (its imagined object) such immediate revelations have ceased also. If. viii. 29. will not apply to such immediate revelations; and there is no criterion or touchstone given in scripture therefore, nor to be found elsewhere, by which one can judge what is true or false in this matter; what may be from the Spirit of the Lord, Satan transformed into an angel of light, 2 Cor. xi. 14. or one's own spirit: and it is not to be supposed, a gracious God gives a thing as a privilege, as to which there is so great danger of so hurtful mistake and deception. 1 John iv. 1. 3. and no antidote provided by him against being led into error in the matter. This consideration is of the utmost moment in the argument, and might seem alone decisive; as in all parts of Christianity, in belief, and practice, the Bible is a standard and balance. This will appear of still greater weight, when it is considered, that while other extraordinary gifts, besides that of prophecy, or immediate revelations of facts, and future events, were continued to the Christian church, and in it, the extraordinary gift of discerning of spirits was enjoyed, which enabled to form a certain judgement in the matter, 1 Cor. xii. 10. None pretend the discerning of spirits now has place. To say, immediate revelations are not contrary to scripture, and therefore

therefore may be admitted; affords a strong handle to enthusiasts to establish their unscriptural opinions; for in almost all cases, or rather in every instance, the principle of immediate revelation of present deeds and occurrences, and future events, respects, if not faith, yet obedience; which is to be regulated by scripture alone; therefore is it to be rejected as unscriptural. The Holy Ghost expressly, in scripture, calls us away from such things to the infallible rule of the Bible, when he says by the Apostle Peter, concerning the voice which he, and James, and John, heard from the excellent glory on the mount of transfiguration, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place,* 2 Pet. i. 17.—20. Thus they are to be renounced. This principle admitted, on the foundation of nothing being against it in scripture, opens a gap to the unscriptural pretensions of the church of Rome, and the unscriptural ceremonies and usages of the church of England; Mark vii. 7.; Col. ii. 20. 22.; Tit. i. 14.; 1s. xxix. 13. Admit the immediate revelations under consideration in one case, you will not know where to stop, but must allow them in almost every instance, viz. always where there is no evidence of mistake or imposition. Many instances of such supposed revelations experience says have failed, for one that held, even of them that had the best appearance. If so, Prov. xxx. 6.; Rom. iii. 4. are here to be applied. Were such immediate revelations now real, they are not to be valued or regarded; for they are no saving, or even spiritual privilege. Balaam a wizard, and other wicked men, have received them; Numb. xxiv. 15.—25. There is somewhat which is taken to be immediate revelations, that makes some valuable persons fond of the principle, which is yet of a quite different nature, divine impulse to duty, or due use and improvement of rational or gracious powers one is vested with; for that is founded on scripture, it leads to it, and to the exercise of reason, in subordination to the Bible. It is owned by maintainers of immediate divine revelations, (which, in connection with other considerations, is of great

great weight in this controversy), that the Lord's dealing with his people now is different from what it was before the canon of the scripture was completed. Good men, when they think themselves most certain in the matter of these supposed revelations, may misapprehend, and be imposed on; seeing they have no divine rule to judge by concerning them; as in all parts of religious faith and practice, Gal. vi. 16.; 2 Cor. xi. 14.; Gal. i. 8.; Philip. iii. 16. Satan may suggest to a good man events, in all their circumstances, which he is to effect if the great God shall permit him, Job i. 12.—20. not only days, weeks, months, but many years before; and the Lord may allow the things to happen precisely as foretold, for wise reasons, and ends of providence, that are obvious, or even declared in scripture, Deut. xiii. 1.—4. For Augustine, cited by Zanchius, *De Divinatione*, pag. 3. col. 1. l. 29. and Gilpin, Lond. 1677, p. 27. & 23. are of opinion, that God reveals future events to Satan for the ends of providence; and there seems to be no accounting for many appearances in the moral world but on this supposition. There is a notable passage to this purpose in Doddridge's *Life of Gairdner*, p. 78. It is intimated by Christ, Matth. xxiv. 24. that strange and very remarkable things should be performed by false prophets; and to the same purpose, Mark xiii. 22. There is no promise in scripture of true prophets in the New-Testament church after the days of the apostles. Immediate divine revelations would be a branch of the gift of prophecy, which is always an extraordinary gift; but maintainers of the principle, in effect, upon the whole, make it an ordinary gift of the Spirit of Christ. Luther desired a voice or sign from Heaven to confirm him against Popery; he saw his error, and cried out, Nothing but the Bible. No wise ends of the Lord's government, of the good of his church and people, can be assigned for the continuance of immediate revelations, in the Christian church, after the canon of scripture was completed, and the apostolical age was expired; but the direct contrary appears. It would be a great loss, it might prove a grievous snare, did Christians know future contingent events: Favourable ones foreseen would be apt,

from what is in the hearts of the best persons, Jer. xvii. 9. to excite presumption and vanity; adverse dispensations and circumstances in prospect, might tend to produce most hurtful despondency, dejection, discouragement. If it does not appear, as before observed, that such knowledge was a common and ordinary privilege under the Old-Testament æconomy, much less is it to be expected under the New. From no prophets now, the inference is native, no prophecy, no immediate revelations. The Lord's prophets in Old-Testament times, who had the gift of knowing secret things, and predicting future contingent events, sometimes thought they knew the Lord's mind, and were mistaken; 2 Sam. vii. 3. When the infallible rule was perfectly given, there would be no use for prophets; and therefore no additional prophecies. On the supposition of immediate revelations of hidden facts, and future events, there is no effectual reasoning against Quakers, and other enthusiasts: for the first make such revelations a perfect rule of faith and practice, exclusive of the Bible; the last make them a rule in such kind, along with scripture. For if sticklers for the principle tell them, immediate revelations are extraordinary; they will answer, they are ordinary, and given to influence and direct. To which what can such persons reply? Nothing. It is presumed, it appears from scripture, that the gift of prophecy, knowledge of secret things, and future contingent events, was never given but for the general good of the church. While no part was added to the canon of the scripture for four hundred years, from the days of Zechariah and Malachi till the time of John the Baptist, prophecy, and the gift of it, was not enjoyed by the Jewish church: which seems to be a plain intimation it was to cease altogether when the canon of scripture should be completed. Says Lampe, in his Ecclesiastical History, *Traject. ad Rhenum*, 1726, p. 99. when speaking of the church in the second century, l. 1. "In the mean time extraordinary gifts began, by degrees, to cease, with the establishment of the church. The thing is most certain concerning the gift of tongues. The Montanists objected, The Orthodox had no prophets

“phets while the second age was not expired.” If so, how unreasonable is it to suppose, that the gift of prophecy, or what was a part of it, immediate revelations, are continued in the eighteenth century? John xiv. 26. *The all things which the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father was to send in Christ's name, was to teach; and to bring to the remembrance of Christ's disciples, were whatsoever the Redeemer had said unto them; therefore no immediate revelations.* The prophets in the New-Testament church, mentioned 1 Cor. xii. 28.; Eph. iv. 11. it is agreed, had a temporary extraordinary ministry in the church, Acts xiii. 1. Says Dr Owen, in Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit, and his work, as he is the author of spiritual gifts, Lond. 1693, pag. 158. lin. 8. *a fin.* “*They received immediate revelations and*” “*directions from the Holy Ghost, in things that belong-*” “*ed unto the present duty of the church;*” lin. ult. “*They foretold things to come, by the inspiration of*” “*the Holy Ghost, wherein the duty or edification of*” “*the church was concerned.*” As their office, gift, and work, were extraordinary, and thence ceased at the end of the apostolical age, or soon after, it follows, that the gift of prophecy, or immediate revelations, ceased also. Says Owen, pag. 160. of the same book, lin. 5. “*For to prophesy is nothing, but to declare*” “*hidden and secret things, by virtue of immediate re-*” “*velation, be they of what nature they will; and so is*” “*the word commonly used, Matth. xxvi. 68.; Luke*” “*xxii. 64.* So an *extraordinary gift* without office is “*expressed, Acts xix. 6.* Their prophesying, which “*was their declaration of spiritual things by immediate*” “*revelation, was of the same nature with their speak-*” “*ing with tongues; both extraordinary gifts and opera-*” “*tions of the Holy Ghost.* And of this sort were those “*miracles, healings, and tongues, which God for a*” “*time set in the church.*” This passage imports, that immediate revelations of secret facts, and future events, are both extraordinary gifts; and that they soon ceased in the Christian church. 1 Cor. xiii. 8. *Charity, Christian brotherly love, never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues,*
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they

they shall cease ; ver. 13. *And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three.* These two verses in connection are an intimation by the Holy Ghost, that prophecies should fail, and the gift of prophecy should expire in the Christian church; tongues should cease; the gift of tongues would soon be no more conferred on any of Christ's servants or disciples; faith, hope, and charity, graces of the Spirit, would always remain. This seems a plain indication that prophecy, and that in all its parts and branches, with all other extraordinary gifts, should expire after the days of the apostles, and the expiration of the generation of them who *conversed with Christ in the flesh*, or of those who received the Holy Ghost by their ministry; which the most judicious divines make to be the time of the expiration of extraordinary gifts in the church of Christ. 2 Tim. iii. 16. 17. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable,—that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* If the scripture is profitable, that the man of God may be perfect, immediate revelation must be supposed to render him more than perfect, or it is of no use; and consequently does not really subsist. There is a very remarkable passage in Calamy's Life of Mr John How, Lond. 1724, shewing the pernicious tendency of the principle of supposed immediate revelation of future events; which, the author observes, in reality is the same with inspiration, p. 22. 23. too long to be here transcribed, and which falls entirely in with our preceding reasoning. It is well worth the attentive consideration of any persons who have access to that entertaining book. The following are the words of Zanchius, reckoned one of the most learned and judicious of Protestant writers on this most important and interesting argument. *Zanchii opera, tomo 8vo, Genev. 1669, pag. 11. col. 2. lin. 10. De Divinatione.* “ At quomodo divinæ a diabolicis discernuntur? R. Primo, divinæ voces non amplius, ut ante, audiri solent; “ Deus enim finem loquendi fecit in Filio; Heb. i. *Novissime locutus est in Filio.* Quicquid enim revelandum erat e cœlo ad ecclesiam pertinens, totum in Christo est revelatum: nec alias Dei voces habemus, “ nisi

“ nisi in scripturis S. Quare reliquum, quæ deinceps audiuntur, ceu suspectæ rejiciendæ sint, præsertim si quid circa res futuras, vel circa cultum, loquantur.”—
 “ But how may divine voices or impressions be distinguished from diabolical ones? *Ans.* First, divine voices use no longer to be heard as before: for God finished speaking in his Son; Heb. i. *Hath last of all spoken by his Son.* For whatever was to be revealed from heaven belonging to the church, was wholly revealed by Christ: and we have the voice of God no where but in the holy scriptures. Wherefore it remains, that what voices are henceforth heard, are to be rejected as suspicious, especially if they speak concerning things future, or about worship.”

Answers or exceptions to arguments brought to prove, that immediate divine revelations of secret things, and future events, have continued to the Christian church after the apostolical age.

To the argument, That there have been innumerable instances of such immediate revelations as certain facts, it is answered, No facts are of force in opposition to the express declarations of the Holy Ghost in scripture, or the native result of such divine testimonies. Many, if not almost all, supposed predictions of future events by holy and intelligent men, it is more than probable, were only applications of scripture-prophecies and examples to nations, persons, circumstances, and events, declaring how it was to be expected the Lord would act toward them, leaving a latitude to his sovereignty, who will not be limited. It is affirmed, Archbishop Usher foretold things to come: but he only told what appeared to him likely to happen to the church of Christ, and in the world, in consequence of his carefully studying the book of the Revelation. What is little attended to, the Bible is a history of providence, as well as a rule of faith and practice: from it is to be learned how the Lord, keeping his ordinary course in providence, will deal with churches and nations of such disposition and practice as those related in scripture; and by this rule,
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men mighty in the scriptures, have told what events were to be expected in certain circumstances; which actually took place, and were counted predictions, when such persons were far from pretending or imagining that they had received immediate divine revelations. To this effect it is told, that Mr Thomas Hogg, minister at Kiltarn, in Rosshire, one of the most holy and wisest of ministers, was in prison at London for nonconformity, in the reign of James II. of England; one Dr Gordon, who wished to have him set at liberty, said to him, "If you will tell whether the events of the King's reign are like to be favourable or adverse, I will get you liberated." Mr Hogg answered, "Doctor, I thought you knew me better, than to suppose, that I believe there are now any immediate divine revelations." He answered, "Whether you believe so or not, do as I desire, and you shall be brought out of prison." On being allowed time as required, Mr Hogg said to the Doctor, "Tell the King, I have been reading the books of Kings and Chronicles, to see if I could find a king like his Majesty, or subjects like his Majesty's subjects; and I discern, that if God keeps his ordinary course of procedure in providence, the events of his Majesty's reign are not like to be favourable, but adverse." Mr Hogg was liberated; and every one knows King James was driven from his throne by the nation for invading their civil and religious rights, and died an exile in France. — It was mentioned in a former part of this essay, that probably the Lord reveals future events to Satan for wise ends of providence. If so, there is no reason to doubt the devil can impress these on the imaginations of the best of men, so as to make them think that they receive them immediately from the Lord. Their own fancies also may so work, as to make the most holy and intelligent persons who have that turn conclude, that illusions of their brains are immediate divine revelations. After all, many, or most, of those supposed facts, need to be far better ascertained as to their existence ere they can be justly reasoned from. — To the argument, That the Lord has no where said in scripture, immediate revelations shall not be after the apostolical age, therefore they

they may be; and it is limiting sovereignty to say, they cannot be;—it is answered, The hinge of the controversy betwixt the church of England, maintainers of the lawfulness of the inventions of men in the worship of God, and the Dissenters, who deny such lawfulness, here applies as precisely in point. Those of the church of England say, What is not forbidden in scripture, is lawful; the Dissenters affirm, What is not appointed in scripture by precept or example, is prohibited, Matt. xv. 9.; Mark vii. 7. We argue, What is not promised, what has no foundation in scripture, is not to be expected, cannot have place. Though the Old-Testament church had immediate revelations, such as were mentioned when the arguments for continuance of revelations were adduced, and, it is presumed, the New-Testament church does not enjoy any revelations but those recorded in scripture, they are no losers by such want, but great gainers; as, in place of that and other ways of divine discovery, they have the Bible, a perfect and infallible rule of faith and practice, a certain touchstone, by which to try the spirits, 1 John iv. 1.; 1 Thess. v. 21.; Rev. ii. 2. and are not in such danger as were Old-Testament saints, who, in room of the Bible, had dreams, visions, immediate revelations, and other things, that hazarded their being imposed on by Satan transformed into an angel of light, 2 Cor. xi. 14.; artful seducers, Ezek. xiii. 17.—23.; 2 Pet. iii. 17.; 2 John 7.; Eph. iv. 14.; and their own imaginations.—Admit that the Lord's children now have divine dreams that excite to duty, and are premonitions of dangers to be avoided, these are different from immediate revelations of facts, and future events; are of the same nature with some part of divine influence, common to all believers, and thus do not enter justly into the present argument. Most dreams are the vain roving of the imagination, occasioned by our thoughts and pursuits when awake, Eccl. v. 3. 7.; Jer. xxiii. 25.—28.; xxix. 8. Or, if they are supposed, with Baxter on the Soul, to be the effect of the agency of good or evil spirits on our spirits and bodies, (a principle that will perhaps not be easily refuted), that will not vary the case. To affirm, that
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the canon of the scripture was not completed with the book of the Revelation, and that somewhat may possibly be still added to it by its divine author, opens a gap for the unscriptural principles and traditions of the church of Rome, and invalidates or overturns the foundation Protestant principle, That we are to believe the Bible to be the word of God, not from the testimony or declaration of the church, but the marks and characters of it in the scriptures themselves. Our faith thereof is to be resolved, not into the authority of the church, but into the authority of the Lord speaking in his word: for if additions may be made to the canon of scripture, now about 1700 years after the book of Revelation of John was given to the church, the Bible is not yet a complete and perfect rule in extent; and, which shews the extravagance of the supposition under consideration, it is a justly received principle of Protestants, That the books of the Old and New Testament were received into the canon of scripture by the church from the infallible illumination of the Holy Ghost; for a spirit of prophecy remained in the Jewish and Christian church, till the canon of the Old and New Testament was sealed and completed.—To the argument, That immediate revelations may have place, though they are not of the same weight and use to other persons as to them that receive them, because there are some things in Christianity experienced by believers which they cannot fully represent to others; it is answered, This argument allows, that a scriptural reason of such revelations for the conviction of others, cannot be rendered: they are therefore to be rejected by the Holy Ghost's express declaration and appointment, 1 Pet. iii. 15. Though Christians cannot express some inward workings of their hearts toward God in words, such things are scriptural, and could be tried by the rule of the Bible, were they uttered. The Lord indeed said, Gen. xviii. 17. *Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?* the destruction of Sodom. But that is of no weight to establish the principle of immediate revelations in the New-Testament church now: for immediate revelation of secret things, and future events, was one of the *divers manners* in which God spake unto the fathers

fathers by the prophets in Old-Testament times, Heb. i. 1. before he spake unto us, the New-Testament church, in these last days by his Son, exclusive of all these manners, and so as to put an end to them, ver. 2. as was before proved. Besides, Abraham was a prophet, as God revealed to the church and world by him the promised Messiah, and Saviour of sinners, as to spring from his loins, Gen. xii. 3. The most judicious commentators, yea indeed all of them, for what appears, are of opinion, *the secret of the Lord that is with them that fear him*, Psal. xxv. 14. is not the secret dispensations of his providence, but his word and counsel to guide and direct them in the right way, as is explained by the following words in the verse; *and he will shew them his covenant*; termed a secret, because of the many and deep mysteries in it; or his love and favour, called *his secret*, Job xxix. 4; Prov. iii. 32.; or his gracious and fatherly providence in general. When the Lord says, Is. xlv. 11. *Ask me of things to come concerning my sons*, the meaning plainly is, of the methods of his grace and providence in carrying on his work in them toward perfection. The Dutch translation of the words is, *they (unbelievers) have asked me of things to come*; impudently to make trial of my omniscience; or, according to our translation, the Lord sends that people to ask his prophets. Thus it is nothing in the present argument. Though it is said, Am. iii. 7. *Surely, the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets*, it is not said he revealeth his secret to his people also. Thus the passage seems a plain affirmation, the Lord does not reveal his secret to the people, except by the prophets inspired. The branch of the argument by analogy therefore is of no weight against a flat divine denial. Christ said, John xv. 15 *All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you*, for instruction and office of ministers, comfort and salvation of believers. But immediate revelations of secret things, and future events, would not be for the spiritual benefit of the one or the other, or real advantage in any regard, but would prove hurtful, as was before clearly proved. It is presumed, a desire to know futurity is justly considered

dered as an evidence of a weak mind. Imprudence is a moral evil; is it then to be supposed, that the great God will cherish what is to be blamed in his own children? John xvi. 13. *And he (the Spirit of truth) will shew you things to come.* The plain meaning of these terms is, He would be a spirit of prophecy in different persons, enabling them to predict future contingent events, till the canon of the scripture should be completed; because prophecy, and miraculous powers and operations, are the evidences to the world of the truth of Christianity, and of the scriptures, as a revelation from God; and it is a fact fully established in the preceding part of this essay, that prophecy and miraculous powers ceased with the generation of them who conversed with Christ in the flesh, or of those who received the Holy Ghost by their ministry. Therefore these words are no promise of the continuance of immediate revelations after that time.

Exceptions against the arguments to prove, that immediate divine revelations of secret or future events, are not continued to the Christian church after the apostolical age, considered; and these arguments further illustrated.

It will be said, Are there not such things as divine impressions on the minds of Christians, not only impressions of a sanctifying and comforting nature and influence, but also excitements to duties, warnings of dangers, discoveries of snares, suggestions to practise things that may be profitable to one's self or others, in body, health, spirit, talents, character, estate, or condition? *Ans.* Yes. But these impressions, and immediate revelations, are quite distinct things. It is most difficult in many or most instances to judge of their rise, nature, and tendency. For that, and other reasons, persons are not to lay stress on the impression as made, even when passages of scripture are brought to remembrance, chiefly or solely because impressed on the mind, nor at all simply as impressed; but only on the thing impressed as spiritual, agreeable to the principles of solid reason,

reason, and suited to one's condition in a religious regard, moral consideration, civil respect, or natural view.

Quest. Am not I to believe a word of grace and promise brought to my remembrance, not only because it is the word of God, but also the rather to believe it, and take comfort from it, that it is brought to my remembrance, and impressed on my mind, by the Holy Ghost, as suited to my condition, to give me comfort and relief, as a fulfilment of the promises, John xiv. 26.; 1 John ii. 27.; John xvi. 13.? *Ans.* No sober persons who believe the scriptures, and consider them, will deny, that in multiplied instances the Holy Ghost brings express passages of scripture, promises, doctrines, precepts, &c. to the remembrance of believers, according to their need. But it is the authority of the Lord God speaking in his word, and by it, that is the ground of our faith; and not the Spirit his impressing it on our minds, and bringing it to our remembrance. One is therefore as much bound to believe and apply promises of the new covenant, and words of grace, suited to his case, and binding him to believe them, when he reads them in the Bible, as after he is persuaded, that the Spirit has brought them to his remembrance. Thus we are to lay stress on the word as in the Bible, a rule of faith and practice, not as brought to our remembrance; for as the Holy Ghost brings to one's remembrance scripture-passages, the devil throws Bible texts and words into the minds of believers for different pernicious purposes, as he cited scriptures to the Lord Jesus, Matt. iv. 6. One's own spirit recollects parts of the sacred records. It is a matter of great difficulty, as well as of high importance in practice, to distinguish rightly what of scripture is brought to mind by the Holy Ghost, what by the devil, what by our own spirit. The grand question however is, Has one made by grace the use of such texts or passages appointed and directed in the Bible? then they are safe in what manner soever such of the Holy Ghost's words were impressed on the mind, or by whatever means. In this case, one may warrantably take additional comfort from the consideration, that the Holy Ghost enabled him to mix such his words with faith; so that by his energy and blessing,

they have profited his soul, Heb. iv. 2. There is the utmost need of all caution and accuracy in treating this argument, in writing, preaching, conversation, or practice; for Satan leads poor souls into ruining snares by mistakes in the matter. One who never was exercised to godliness (on the contrary is evidently immoral) shall have Is. liv. 5. or some such passage, warmly impressed on his mind at a communion-season, or under affliction; the person concludes, this is the Lord telling him he is his God and husband. All endeavours by Christians, during his life, or at death, to break the ruining snare, are ineffectual; the poor soul goes to the grave with a lie in the right hand, saying, when told their spots are not the spots of the Lord's children, "The Lord told me, going to such a communion, or in the time of it, he my maker was my husband, and I believe him; he is my husband, after all you can say." Others exercised about the salvation of their soul, and convinced of sin in some degree, but who never got a saving discovery of Christ, and of the way of salvation through him, and thus never were led to seek from the Lord saving faith in him, so as to attain and act it, shall have such texts as Is. xliii. 25.; Matt. ix. 2. warmly, with continuance, impressed on their mind by the devil; they conclude, this certainly is the Spirit of the Lord, testifying that they are children of God. Thus they fall short of real conversion: and if the Lord shall not mercifully break the dangerous snare, *an unwise son, or daughter, not only stays long in the place of the breaking forth of children*, Hos. xiii. 13. but perishes in it for eternity. Other well-inclined or serious and pious persons understanding, that Christians who are of great character, are accustomed to get scriptures impressed on their minds, as discoveries of duty, or intimations of events, to have place in their lives, shall chuse their employment, relations, connections, or residences, in short, undertake nothing in life or business but by scriptures impressed on their minds, and think they are under the leading of the Spirit of Christ in the whole, when deceived by the devil, till the Lord breaks the snare, by making them attend to Prov. xix. 27.; John x.

or some such passages, or by instrumentality of persons who had been thus ensnared, or by some other means.

A letter from the Reverend Mr W. S. to the Reverend Mr James Cuthbert, late minister of the gospel at Culrofs.

October 31. 1712.

My very dear brother,

Your kind letter about the abjuration I received the 28th instant, when the justices were convened, and all eyes intent upon what ministers would do that day; particularly in this place, where an expectation was entertained that all the members in this presbytery would be nonjurors, my colleague only excepted, and a resolution taken, to use the law to the rigour. But the ill-natured party met with a disappointment, which confounds them: for our presbytery got light, courage, and strength, and went into open court to take that oath; where the moderator delivered the following introduction. " My Lord Prefes, We the members of the
" presbytery of —, as faithful and loyal subjects, come
" here before the Honourable Justices, in obedience to
" the law requiring us to take the oath of abjuration:
" having already solemnly called upon the name of the
" Lord, and received light and encouragement from
" the word of the Lord, to give this test of our loyalty,
" we therefore come to do it heartily, freely, and wil-
" lingly." The speaker spoke out with concern and composure. The Jacobites are mightily surpris'd; a grave silence is in the house; our spirits are pleasantly compos'd to perform this piece of worship; and as we came in peace to do it, we were pleasantly confirm'd after performance.

I know you'll be surpris'd, and other worthy brethren, in your and neighbouring presbyteries, who might have heard of our fears and darkness anent that oath, unless the Father of lights hath surpris'd you with light, love, and liberty, to go about it as your duty, as he has
done

done among us. In which case the following account will please, and perhaps confirm you; for the Lord can confirm the stronger even by the weaker brethren.

You know there are but four brethren in our presbytery, Mr B—ie, Mr F—r, Mr C—r, and I. As to Mr B—ie, he was reckoned a clear brother long before now; and yet he was in great distress, as he told me, particularly the 27th, about parting with his brethren. I told him, the next day was appointed for prayer and conference, and then we would fully understand the minds of each other upon that point; and till then I would suspend the revealing of my thoughts, and in the mean time cry to Heaven for confirmed light.

The other brethren came on Tuesday, and gave us the following account. Mr F—r informs, that he was set upon by some of the worthiest of his parish, who beseeched him, with arguments and tears, to look well to what he did, and not rashly conclude, to deprive their souls of the bread of life, &c. upon which he was made the more earnestly to address a throne of grace for light: whereupon he found he had been so intent upon the objections against the oath, that he considered no arguments in favour of it; and falling a musing and praying upon that head, in the one he finds satisfying answers to objections, and in the other scripture-light for duty; which pleasantly encouraged him; particularly that scripture, *Be subject to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake*, &c.; and finding the articles of this oath lawful, he found, that by divine authority he was obliged to obey this human ordinance.

Mr C—r and he came to C—n on Monday, where, before two worthy persons in that family, they confer upon the matter till it was near midnight. The conclusion was, Mr C—r declared, That he considered the answers given then, and before, to his objections, and could not deny but his reason was so far satisfied that he had nothing to say: "but (says he) I have still
 " a weight remaining, and a fear; and therefore till
 " God remove that, for the whole earth I cannot go
 " into it. Yea (adds he) let the gallows be set up in
 " one place, and the abjuration in another, and let autho-
 " rity

" rity threaten me, that I must chuse the one or just
 " then meet with the other, I would heartily submit to
 " the gallows before I took the abjuration, till God
 " himself clear my way, by giving me the light of his
 " countenance and presence, as well as the light of
 " scripture." To which Mr F——r, in an agony, re-
 plied, That if he was in a delusion in that matter, he
 was so in greater matters; for he had no more for his
 salvation than the word and Spirit of God, and he had
 the same for performing this piece of worship to God,
 and duty to man; and therefore his brother's reluctance
 to it was a temptation to him to shake the foundations of
 his hope for heaven; and therefore intreated him, seeing
 reasoning could prevail nothing with him, to see what
 prayer could do. Upon which Mr C——r being desired
 to pray, did so; in which he found such a down-pour-
 ing of God's Spirit, such an out-pouring of his own,
 such a power and presence of God, that all the joiners,
 being honest and worthy persons; found their souls in
 the suburbs of heaven, as I was told by some of them;
 and having asked Mr C——r about it privately, (for he
 was very modest in presbytery), he told me he never
 had a more distinct view and sweeter gale in all his life.
 After which he retired a little, and returned, and told
 his friends, that God had now cleared him in his duty,
 and he was chearfully willing to perform it, by taking
 the abjuration.

Next morning both Mr F——r and he are confirmed
 in private; come to church; receive renewed confirma-
 tions in public: they come to presbytery; their faces
 shine; they are asked their judgement; they declare their
 clearness with a calm and sweetness, which put me into
 a pleasant surprise; and then my own judgement is re-
 quired, to which I made the following answer. " That
 " I had much of thought and weight about that matter,
 " but never more than last night: though a little before
 " I had some glimmerings of light, yet my weights re-
 " cur, in a double proportion, for confirmed light; and
 " I had met with some particular passages from word,
 " providence, and influences, which pleasantly deter-
 " mined me. And I assured them, it added much to
 " my

“ my confirmation, to find such a pleasant harmony, per-
 “ haps beyond my expectation, among my brethren;
 “ and therefore looked upon it as my duty to perform
 “ that piece of worship. Nevertheless I had a petition
 “ to seek of them, and I was resolved to do it with an
 “ entire regard to their peace and comfort; and that
 “ was, if they would allow me to suspend the exercise
 “ of that duty for a season; because I understood wor-
 “ thy brethren in the south were against that oath, and
 “ I might have more hearing with them before than af-
 “ ter accepting of it; and I was resolved to improve a-
 “ ny room I had in their judgement or affection, for ad-
 “ vancing mutual love between them and us; yea, so
 “ far as I should be enabled, between them and the
 “ church of Scotland.” To which it is answered, That
 the same God who had cleared them so pleasantly, might
 do the same to other brethren; that if I did omit this
 occasion, I might find the door shut; and to be sure the
 malignants of J—— would immediately get the gift of
 my stipend to their meeting-house; and therefore, if I
 had light in it as duty, to declare it by my practice, in
 joining cordially with them. To which I replied, That
 when I said I had light of duty in this matter, I said it in
 singleness of heart, and if they had allowed me to sus-
 pend the exercise of it for a season, I would do it hearti-
 ly; but in regard I had submitted that to them on
 weighty grounds, and that they had advanced reasons
 and resolutions against it, &c. I would cheerfully follow
 my light in going in with them. After which, in pri-
 vate, they told me the above-written account of the
 grounds of their freedom: and then I was still the more
 confirmed.

You have now a short account of what our presbytery
 have done, with the historical part of the reasons there-
 of. If worthy brethren with you have done the like, it
 will greatly confirm us, and add to our joy and strength;
 if otherwise, we shall be obliged to double our prayers,
 for confirmation from him *whose work is perfect, and*
who will not forsake the work of his hands.—Here I
 shall venture on a thought, which I cannot discuss,
 though I had time and paper. Take a taste of it. Upon the

the supposition, that worthy brethren with you; and we should differ about this oath. With you there are worthy men, who may be against this oath, and have not only their reasons against it, but likewise the Lord's presence and countenance, which encourages them to stand out against it. With us there are who have reasons for it, and founded on clear revelation, with the Lord's presence and countenance, to perform this piece of worship to God, and loyalty to man, with fear and joy. How shall we, in this case, win to charitable thoughts of one another, and honourable thoughts of the influence of the Spirit, truly and really conveyed to both parties? I shall add no more, &c.

Mr Cuthbert's reply to Mr S.'s letter.

Reverend and Dear Sir,

YOur letter of the 31st October (for which I give you hearty thanks) came to hand about five weeks ago; and though I was much inclined to answer it sooner, yet several things hindered till now; so that I hope you'll put no unfavourable construction upon the delay.

I had so stated a resolution against the oath, before the time of taking came, and was so easy after it about my own practice, that, in consequence thereof, I could not without concern hear of a difference betwixt you and me, in a matter of such importance as a solemn oath. And though it surpris'd me the more, that I judg'd by what had pass'd betwixt us we would be one in that particular, as I desire we should be in all things else; yet it surpris'd me the less, that one told me what you had done, before your letter came to hand; which though I believed it not, even when positively asserted by a pretty sufficient author, yet cast me into such doubt, as prepar'd me a little for receiving the too true account from yourself.

I am loth, Dear Sir, except you desire it, to give you now, and by writing too, the reasons of my practice; and I am the rather inclined to let that alone, at least for this time, that you give me no particular reasons for

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your own, when you might easily judge that would be the only way to reconcile me to it, and bring me into the same measures, in case the oath should (as it is possible) come about again.

The account you give of the light, courage, and strength, your presbytery got to take that oath, the peace and composure you had in taking it, and the confirmation you attained to after performance, cannot, you know, amount to a better ground of proving it good, than such other accounts from refusers (of which here are many to be produced) can for proving it bad; and an argument equally good for proving either side of the question is good for neither.

These things, when joined with more than ordinary assistance in prayer for direction; and, which is more, a resolution following thereupon, while under the light of the divine countenance; which your account bears to have been the case of one of your brethren, and which, it is like, I might say of some of my brethren here, whose resolution and practice were contrary to his of whom you write; these things, I say, may give us charitable thoughts of the men who attain to such frames of spirit, whether they are jurors or nonjurors; but do not at all determine, whether the resolution taken, or the practice followed, under or after these frames, be lawful or unlawful. And all the accounts that can be given, of having received light in general, while there is no particular mention of the scripture-passages, and when there is no due application made of the case in hand unto these, cannot, should not, determine me, (whose faith or practice must not be determined by another's); for I'll make no hand that way, but by the word of God, the only rule of faith and manners, the true touchstone of truth and duty, which makes that assent faith, whereof it is the ground, and that practice duty, which it directs to: And we will have ever reason for blessing God, who has so well provided for us in this particular: for as this is the sure word of prophecy, the light shining in a dark place, and all other guides are like blazing meteors in the night, which deluding the traveller, draws him aside into dangerous fens, and mar-

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ishy places; so what a maze would we be brought to, if we were to be led by others in the present case, when the men we would be readiest to rely on, differ so much among themselves, while both speak of divine conduct; and yet the contrariety of their sentiments and practice, plainly demonstrates, that both cannot have it in this particular. But let God be true, and every man a liar.

It is a very grave and weighty question you state in the end of your letter. Upon the supposition, that worthy brethren with us and you should differ about this oath, the one having reasons against it, with the Lord's presence and countenance encouraging them to stand it out; the other having reasons for it, founded on clear revelation, with the Lord's presence and countenance to perform this piece of worship to God, and duty to man, with fear and joy; how shall we, say you, in this case, win to charitable thoughts of one another, and honourable thoughts of the influences of the Spirit, truly and really conveyed to both parties?

Had the question been only about the expediency of the oath, which you know is determined by such circumstances as time and place, or the like, which may be different in one place from what it is in another, with you from what it is with us; and that the question were only stated betwixt you and us; the difficulty would not be so great: but when the question is, concerning the lawfulness of the oath as it stands in itself, which is the same to you as to us; and that difference of practice is betwixt persons whose circumstances are the same; what to say, and say well, of the light both parties have, or pretend to have, in a contrary practice, when good men stand on both sides, is, I own, very hard; and I heartily wish you had taken as much time as would have answered your own question with the same distinctness that you proposed it.

Though I may be ashamed to offer my thoughts to you on so important and weighty a point; yet since Mr S. desires it, and that my efforts to answer it, when they express more willingness than ability, may not only give him occasion, but provoke him to give it a full solution,

I humbly lay down the following propositions; under the correction of him to whom I lend them.

1. That a sovereign Lord is pleased to give light to some for clearing up duty, while he with-holds it from others, even of his own people; and this for glorious, wise, and gracious ends, which may appear in the event to such as are left for the time to mistake their way. This is evident from the experience of saints in scripture, and of all ages, past and present. To offer a few particular instances, would be an injury done to a truth that admits of so many.

2. That though the Lord promises direction to such as acknowledge him in their ways, Prov. iii. 6.; yet some *ask, and receive not, because they ask amiss*, Jam. iv. 3.; either when they tempt the Lord, by inquiring about what he has already determined and made clear, or when they provoke him, by entertaining a wrong bias to one side, for gratifying some lust which may secretly lodge in the heart, or use other such undue methods; Numb. xxii. 12. 20. 22.; Psal. lxi. 18.

3. That the Lord may sometimes, through pity to his children, whose frame he knows, and according to his covenant, within the bond whereof they still are, shed on their hearts strengthening, supporting, and comforting influences, either when they are asking direction in a particular case, or when they are employed in some practice, when it is neither that case, nor this practice, that these influences respect, but the otherwise needy case of him who receives them. This proposition is plain, from the account we have in scripture of divine compassions, which flow out for the relief of his own people, in a time of extremity, when their hearts are ready to faint or fail within them, or their state otherwise requires influences, for the support and comfort he gives, and is engaged to give, according to covenant, whatever be their other circumstances; Psal. lxxxix. 33. 34.; ciii. 13. 14.

4. That it is not the influences of the Spirit working in us, but his voice in the scriptures of truth, which is the only determining rule of faith and practice. Influences are indeed necessary to work, maintain, and increase

crease grace; and sometimes must be let out in abundance to strengthen and comfort a feeble fainting spirit. They are necessary for our discerning the rule of the word, and applying particular cases to it, and for encouraging and strengthening us to follow the rule, by believing and practising according to it: but they are not at all the rule, though necessary for the right use of the rule. This proposition is the commonly received doctrine of Protestants, who, in opposition to enthusiasts, thus distinguish betwixt the efficiency of the Spirit in the impression it makes upon us by its influences, and the testimony of the same Spirit in the word of God, *Jl. viii. 20.; Luke xvi. 29.; Psal. cxix. 18. and li. 12.*

5. That God's children may have some principles or truths of religion, which may be some way concerned in deciding the point they are anxious about, cleared up to them, while they are exercised about that point, and may receive a considerable measure of the light of God's countenance; and yet, after all, be left to make undue inferences from these general principles so cleared up; and such an undue application of them to the case in hand, as may draw them into an unwarrantable sinful practice. This proposition is put beyond all controversy by the history of Job's friends. They were good men, who no doubt asked divine counsel how they should deal with their distressed friend; they are wonderfully enlightened in the knowledge of many sublime and important truths of religion which were concerned with the point of Job's trial; yea, and the rapture in which they spoke, plainly shews, that they were under the light of divine countenance, and very lively spiritual influences while they dealt with Job: notwithstanding of all which, from these truths they draw undue inferences, by which they mistake their measures in their dealing with Job; and sin so grievously, as the Lord lays it solemnly to their charge, as what must be expiated by a burnt-offering, *Job xlii. 7. 8.*

Now, Sir, from these propositions, set in a true light, and better improved, I humbly conceive, may arise a solution to your question. The case of Job directs us to charitable thoughts of one another: he is commanded

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of God to pray for his offending friends; who, meaning well perhaps, did what was ill; and he was accepted for them, so as the Lord dealt not with them after their folly. And when we duly consider the dispensations of God toward his people, particularly in the conveyances of influences, so as to give every thing its due place, the word its place, and the Spirit his; and to use means in a suitable way, applying them to their proper ends, and to ascribe effects to their own particular causes, we'll then see, that whatever may be our mismanagement, there is still ground to entertain honourable thoughts of the Spirit's influences. We will see indeed a beautiful variety in the free actings of a sovereign Spirit blowing where he listeth: but there is also a steady unalterable uniformity in his actings, with respect to the purity of his nature, according to which, he cannot behold, far less approve, evil, or direct to it; with respect also to the eternal rule of righteousness, according to which he unchangeably acts from the perfection of his nature, and we still ought to act from the force of the obligation it lays upon us; and, finally, in respect of the everlasting covenant, within the bond whereof the Lord's people are, and unto which he stands faithful; in the view and faith whereof, be our failures what they will, we may say with the Psalmist, *His work is honourable and glorious, and his righteousness endureth for ever. The works of the Lord are verity and judgement; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.—He hath commanded his covenant for ever.* Psal. cxl. 3. 7. 8. 9.

Now, Sir, I know too well to whom I write, to make a long application of the preceding doctrine; I shall only draw a general inference from it; and however we may differ in a more particular one, I'm persuaded we'll agree in this, viz. That we had need to act cautiously in seeking, and to speak warily of obtaining, light and encouragement to duty, by word and influences; since there is danger of misguiding our steps, by undue application made to the matter we ask light about, and then charging a holy faithful God with what, on further trial, we'll find our own sin and folly.

I had ended my letter here, or soon after, if the particular history you give me of your own and other brethrens practice did not invite me to offer some remarks upon it: and that I may deal fairly, I shall allow you to shew them to the persons concerned.

1. I find not in the whole of your letters one passage of scripture offered to favour the oath, save only that of 1 Peter ii. 13. *Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*; which Mr F—— himself, who goes on that foundation, owns to bind to the practice, only on supposition the oath is lawful; which, as it is the great question, so it is not in the least determined by that scripture. You mention your being determined by word, providences, and influences; which, though you name at once, I'm persuaded you put a difference betwixt, as to a determining virtue; since you know that it is only the word can be the ground on which a person must go, in faith, or duty. Influence indeed disposes to discern, and strengthens to perform, the duty revealed and cleared up by the word; and providence may be an adminicle for confirmation to a person so previously cleared and encouraged to duty: but neither doth this, or that, but the word only, amount to any ground of faith for truth and duty. Mean-time, Dear Sir, you mention no scripture-passage at all in which you got light, though, you know, that must be the only thing can determine my practice, or reconcile me to yours.

There is no mention at all made by you of any thing like argument to determine the rational nature, save only what your brethren tell you of its being certain, that the malignants of I—— would immediately get the gift of your stipend for their meeting-house; which, as it is what I do not believe one word of, so was and could only be proposed by them to one already clear about the oath, but hesitating about the expediency of taking it then. But still I hear nothing of the grounds on which you were clear to take it, nor any of your brethrens reasons, save the foresaid one of Mr F——'s, of which afterwards; yet, in the end of your letter, you mention an *above-written* account of the grounds of their freedom;

dom; and a little after you speak of the reasons of their practice, as *before* declared, yet I'm still to find them out in your letter. This, your being silent on the grounds, appears the more strange to me, that you and I seem'd once to agree upon letting the oath alone; and since my dear friend parted with me, why (having a good occasion) did not he tell me wherefore? especially considering that my letter, to which yours was an answer, and which (by a providence which ought to be considered too, came to your hand when the justices were convened to administer the oath) bore an argument for refusing it, founded on the dubiousness of it; which rendering the taking of it a sin, afforded us the true ground of stating sufferings upon, since we are called rather to suffer for refusing, than to sin by taking a dubious oath. At the same time, I referred you to the act first imposing it, which affords more grounds for refusing it than a bare doubt, though that is sufficient. Might I not then have received some answer to this? and may I not, upon the whole, charge you with a little omission, and crave amends by the next?

2. Since your brethren and you did not understand one another till the 28th, and that you are, at least they were, not at a point when that day was appointed for prayer and conference, as is evident from the account you give, will you pardon me to think, (till I'm better informed), that the hurry of that day, and shortness of time that the business thereof could allow, made it improper for the affair you designed it for, and fitter for communicating light and resolutions formerly taken, (which was the use you turned it to), than for finding light, and framing resolutions thereupon?

3. Upon what you say of Mr F——r's being set upon by some of the worthiest of his parish, &c. his addressing more earnestly thereupon the throne of grace, his falling a musing and praying upon that head, his finding in the one satisfying answers to objections, and in the other scripture-light for duty, particularly 1 Pet. ii. 13. and that thereupon finding the articles of the oath lawful, he was obliged by divine authority to obey this human ordinance, I offer to your and his consideration,

(1) That as that scripture does not determine the question, Whether the oath be lawful, or not? but only obliges to the practice in case it is lawful; so all the articles contained in an oath may be lawful; that is to say, all that is asserted may be true, and all that it engages to may be lawfully done; while yet the oath cannot be lawfully sworn, by reason of circumstances that may attend the imposition and practice, that are more determining to the forbearance, than the human ordinance is to the performance; these being seconded by divine authority, as well as that; and the interests which in these circumstances are incroached upon by the taking, full as valuable as the human ordinance, and more wounded thereby, than it could be by refusing the oath as matters were stated. (2) If Mr F——r concludes the oath lawful upon his having considered objections against it, he had need to inquire, whether he has considered them all, or not; and I can assure him, that (modestly speaking) there is a half dozen he never heard of against that controverted sense of the oath in which he took it, as the obvious one. Since then he could never build his conclusion of the lawfulness of the oath, or his resolution to take it, on so sandy a foundation as his having answered objections against it, he must have some clear positive demonstration to clear what is at first view dubious, continues so to many yet, and was for some good time so to himself; and I wonder he gave you no account of that: and indeed I'm the more curious to know it, that I doubt if the state of the matter admits it, and yet I'm persuaded an oath did certainly require it.

4. As to what Mr C——r said at C——n, that he would submit to the gallows before he would submit to the abjuration, till God himself clear his way, by giving him the light of his countenance and presence, as well as the light of scripture; unto which I must not only say, that if he judged the resolution duty, the style was too like Peter's, but also that it was an unwarrantable purpose, and wrong disposition of mind, which, I'm afraid, discovers the dangerous error of putting the influences of the Spirit in place of his objective testimony in the word; which last being the true and only ground

and rule of duty, ought to be followed even when the light of God's countenance is wanting. Might not this, Sir, provoke the Lord in righteousness to let him wander who had thus set up a guide for himself, and give him occasion, by letting him fall, to see his error afterwards, and amend it?

5. I like Mr F——r's reply no better; (for I must deal ingenuously with my worthy brethren, whom I love and honour in the Lord). "If," says he, "I am in a delusion about that matter, I am so in greater matters; for I have no more for my salvation than the word and Spirit of God, and I have the same for performing this piece of worship to God, and duty to men:" and he adds, "That his brethren's reluctance to it was a temptation to him to shake the foundation of his hope for heaven." It is like, these words, spoken in an agony, (as you say they were), might go far with one of Mr C——r's tender disposition; but I must say, they yielded no more ground for his going into his measures, than the old prophet's words did to the young, for his going in to eat with him when he seduced him. I cannot let the expression go without a remark or two. *First*, As I am not very fond of the phrase of *shaking the foundation of a believer's hope for heaven*, when I consider that Christ, the promises, the power, wisdom, righteousness, faithfulness, and immutability of God, are the true foundation of a believer's hope, which standeth for ever immovable; so, taking these for one's evidences for heaven, (which I doubt not he meant), I wonder that one who has the evidences of word and Spirit should look upon the reluctance of a brother, to a practice of that kind about which he doubted, as a temptation to him to reject them. *2dly*, I cannot but blame his putting on a level with respect of certainty, the evidences founded on the word, which is a shining bright light, abounding in the clearest, plainest marks of grace, and inculcated by the Spirit, who is given for a witness to that particular; and those evidences which one has in a particular point, on which the scripture does not cast so many, nor so direct beams, nor the Spirit diffuse such abundant influences; a point which being complex, gives occasions for many

many objections and doubts ; for clearing of which, and finding sufficient foundation for an oath, the sense whereof is controverted amongst the gravest and most penetrating men, we must have recourse to the styles, customs, and laws of men, which, through the imperfections of their authors, are greatly uncertain and intricate, and sometimes inconsistent the one with the other ; none of which can be said of the word of God, out of which are brought, by the aid of the Spirit, the evidences of a state of grace. Pray you, Sir, is this a just parallel ? I must (with the good leave of my friend) say, He spake unadvisedly with his lips ; and I know not what might quickly be the consequence of so rash and unwary an expression.

6. The general account you give of the gale Mr C——r had in prayer, and his distinct views, without telling whereof ; his telling his friends, (when, after retiring a little, he returned to them), that now God had cleared him in his duty, without telling how ; that he was then fully willing to take the abjuration, without telling why ; and, finally, that he was confirmed, both in public and private, without telling by what ; this account of yours bears at most but this, that he had spiritual influences, and under, or after them, was determined to take the oath, and he took it. The distress of his mind, which Mr F——r's speech, in an agony, meeting with a tender disposition, might have occasioned, or considerably increased, made influences needful ; and it is like the good man got them : but how these did, or could warrant his resolution and practice following thereon, I see not ; and whether he received true light in that matter, is a question which your account leaves as undetermined as it found it.

Now, Dear Sir, I hope neither you, nor my other worthy brethren, will be offended at the freedom of these remarks. It is the natural right of all men to inquire into an account which concerns so much their own practice as this does mine ; which, for ought I can yet see, is well warranted. And if my remarks are just, they may have influence to advance the interest, and support the honour, of our holy religion, which may

suffer by mistakes in so nice and important a point as that of seeking and finding light in duty is, whether they are jurors or nonjurors who entertain them.

I would have now given you my reasons for refusing this oath if you had desired them; and, I assure you, had given them sooner, and at much greater length than I did, had I had any doubts about your practice: but I desire to submit to Providence, which determined the matter otherwise.

What the consequence of this oath may be, with respect to magistrates, ministers, and people, I know not. I own, fears are suggested to me from all the three; but the God of mercy can disappoint them. I am indeed against the oath; but am as much against a division of the church on that head: and though it is with grief I think of our being on different sides in that particular, yet I'll endeavour, through grace, to entertain due regard and affection for my brethren as formerly; in which you shall, as before, have a particular share. I am, without any diminution of love,

Reverend and Dear Sir,

Yours as formerly.

P. S. I have at length made out this long letter; and if you are not angry at me, give proof of it, in giving me a return how soon your convenience can allow. Give my kind and humble service to your colleague, and to Mr F——r, and Mr C——r, whom I have remembered in my letter. My colleague, I find, has a pet at you; I leave it to himself to tell you on what grounds. Mean-time you may guess them. He has of late professed some skill in medicine, and has attained to such a degree of it, as he gives very just opinions of his patients when the symptoms are plain; and now he is positive, by those which appear about the ministers of R. that they are sick of an ague; perceiving that the warmth in which they refused the allegiance was no natural heat, because it is followed with so cold a fit as that in which they

they have taken the allegiance, with the abjuration to boot. He is afraid that some other physicians, who are not so tender of his patients credit as he, will alledge, that the late cold fit has proceeded from the sharp sour wind of a penalty, which will greatly reflect on the constitution of their body. Adieu.

Extracts relating to the subjects of the preceding Essay and Letters.

— Satan is transformed into an angel of light : And hence we have heard, that some have heard voices; some have seen the very blood of Christ dropping on them; some have seen a great light shining in the chamber; some wonderfully affected with their dreams; some in great distress have had inward witness, *Thy sins are forgiven*; and hence such liberty and joy, that they are ready to leap up and down the chamber ! O adulterous generation. This is natural and usual with men; they would fain see Jesus, and have him present to give them peace; and hence Papists have his images. — Wo to them that have no other manifested Christ, but such an one. *Shepard's Parable of the ten virgins, P. 1. p. 198.*

— Consider how difficult, yea, and impossible, it is to determine, that such a voice, vision, or revelation, is of God, and that Satan cannot feign or counterfeit it; seeing he hath left no certain marks by which we may distinguish one spirit from another. *Flavel's Causes and Cures of mental errors, cause 14.*

— He (viz. Col. Gardiner) never pretends, in any of the passages cited above, or elsewhere, to have received any *immediate revelations* from God, which should raise him above the ordinary methods of instruction, or discover any thing to him, whether of doctrines or facts. No man was further from pretending to *predict future events*, except it were from the moral prognostications of causes natu-
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rally tending to produce them.——Neither was he at all inclinable to govern himself by secret impulses upon his mind, leading him to things for which he could assign no reason but the impulse itself. Had he ventured, in a presumption on such secret agitations of mind, to teach, or to do any thing not warranted by the dictates of sound sense and the word of God, I should readily have acknowledged him an enthusiast; unless he could have produced some other evidence than his own, to have supported the authority of them. *Dr Doddridge's Life of Colonel Gardiner, edit. 4. Lond. 1763. p. 83.*

——I had heard from several, (and it had been confirmed to me by Mr *Jeremy White*, who lived at *Whitehall* at the very same time with Mr *Howe*), that the notion of a *particular faith* in prayer prevailed much in *Cromwell's* court; and that it was a common opinion among them, that such as were in a special manner favoured of God, when they offered up prayers and supplications to him for his mercies, either for themselves, or others, often had such impressions made upon their minds and spirits by a divine hand, as signified to them, not only in the general, that their prayers would be heard, and graciously answered, but that the particular mercies that were sought for would be certainly bestowed; nay, and sometimes also intimated to them in what way and manner they would be afforded, and pointed out to them future events, which in reality is the same with inspiration. Having heard of mischief done by the prevalence of this notion, I took the opportunity that offered, when there was nothing to hinder the utmost freedom, to inquire at Mr *Howe*, what he had known about this matter, and what were his apprehensions concerning it. He told me, the prevalence of the notion that I mentioned at *Whitehall*, at the time when he lived there, was too notorious to be called in question; and that not a little pains was taken to cultivate and support it; and that he once heard a sermon there, (from a person of note), the avowed design of which was, to maintain and defend it. He said, he was so fully convinced of the ill tendency of such a principle, that

that after the hearing this sermon, he thought himself bound in conscience, when it came next to his turn to preach before *Cromwell*, to set himself industriously to oppose it, and to beat down that spiritual pride and confidence which such fancied impulses and impressions were apt to produce and cherish. He told me, he observed, that while he was in the pulpit, *Cromwell* heard him with great attention, but would sometimes knit his brows, and discover great uneasiness; and that afterwards he was cooler in his carriage to him than before. *Dr Calamy's Life of Mr John Howe, Lond. 1724, p. 21.—23.*

THE END.

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